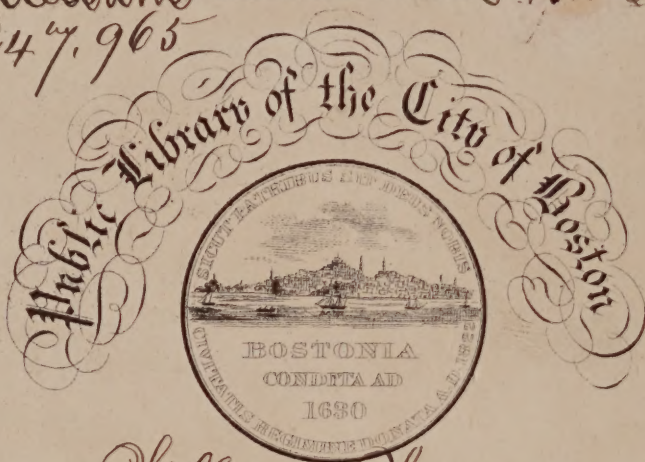


FRANCISCO

BY

WM. WATROUS

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By William Watrous

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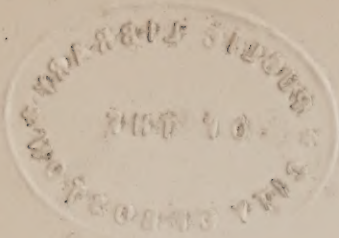


FRANCISCO:

A POEM.



BY WM. WATROUS.



247.965

William Watson.

June 22, 78

H. S. CROCKER & CO.
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The daring soul that sails an unknown deep,
And sinks, perchance, a struggling wight,
Ere farther shores have met his longing sight;
The pioneer, scaling Sierra's steep,

Whelmed in its snows in icy sleep;

The restless mind, with doubt's clear piercing light,
Projecting rays through superstition's night,
Living in scorn, dying with none to weep,
Have joys more rare than stir lethargic hearts
Who plow and reap, and move in traders' marts.

FRANCISCO.

Three ships are on the sea, and dusky night
Fades into day, while now upon the right
Faint orange bands of light begin to peep,
And trembling dance upon the foamy steep
And rim of the long southern swell; then all
Like to an elfin crew released from thrall,
Skip gleeful on from rounded crest to crest,
Plunging at last into the distant west.
How glad the waters rise to kiss the light;
How from their lusty manes shake brooding night!
The sails swell faintly with the humid air
That comes up from the south, and here and there
A lonely bird circles his easy flight,
Nor turns aside at the unwonted sight
Of these black hulls, upon whose sluggish track
The slant rays glisten on the slimy back

FRANCISCO.

Of a huge whale, who rolls him o'er and o'er
In gambols slow upon his wat'ry floor.

Now up the ratlins to the topmost spar
A sailor creeps, and gazes near and far.
What's that upon the left? He looks again.
Aye, sure it is a ship; with might and main
He shouts the welcome cry, "Sail ho! sail ho!"
"Where?" speaks a hoarse voice from the deck below.
"Upon the larboard bow, six points away."
There, dimly through the mists of new-born day,
Her white sails seem a spectre of the night,
That lingers ere it takes its hasty flight.
The sleepy watch, who snore beneath the rail,
Jump to their feet and cry, "A sail, a sail."
Down through the fore-hatch and the after, too,
The joyous shout pierces the timbers through;
Pulses of life from truck to kelson run,
Then up the hatch come running, one by one,

FRANCISCO.

With eager eyes, the swart and hairy crew.
Each clutched a weapon, for well each one knew
That in those lonely seas, none but a foe,
Or the great ship, would singly dare to go,
Which yearly from the Mexique coast sails straight
To the far eastern isles with precious freight
Of golden ingots and bright argent bars
Delved from the rocky tops that near the stars,
Silently sleep on Cordillera's crest,
Casting black shadows towards the breezy west.
Then from the larger ship a signal flew
Upon the lazy air, and outward blew,
Which told two ships from out the fleet
To turn with quick dispatch, haul trim each sheet,
Spread each sail, and glide upon the stranger,
Nor give him time to escape the danger,
If foe he proves; but if a friend he be,
Ask whence and how upon this southern sea
He sails alone, what port or succor craves,
Or whether vexes thus these purple waves

FRANCISCO.

To wage harrassing war from day to day
On Spanish towns and ships as lawful prey.
Now slowly from their course the two ships glide,
Broad canvas wings spreading on either side.
But slowly part the waters 'neath the prow;
Uncertain yet, the breezes fitful blow,
The ships sink heavy as the waves go past,
And the patched sails flap 'gainst the creaking mast.
The ships are twain that sail towards the west,
One called the Cygnet, of that fleet the best;
The other Cora, name of gentle maid
Who loved a pirate, simple souls had said;
But gentle love had long since pined to death,
Its soul had blown away before the breath
Of beastly license that had filled the lips
And daily life within those blackened ships.
Along the Cygnet's deck the Captain strides,
Cursing the sun, the sleeping winds, the tides,
Cursing the fates that never seemed to tire
To thwart his wishes, when the strong desire

FRANCISCO.

Of blood and booty overflowed his soul.
Frequent aloft he gazed, then o'er the whole
Bank'd cloud-drifts, rising slowly, white and large,
On swelling wave-tops, and the far-off marge
That circled the horizon's dip; where bars
Of shadow their unfolding surface mars,
Straight shooting across their creamy whiteness,
Brown, edged with a warm golden brightness.
The black-browed Captain, with his hand o'er eye,
Gazes upon the clouds, and doth espy
The lurking breezes dallying, though they long
To greet the ocean with their whistling song.
Ah, now! they come o'er the heaving water,
And play round the shrouds with jocund laughter,
Fill out the sails, and tip with diamond spray
The curling waves towards the rising day.
Joy fills the hearts of those stern men who group
And gather on the decks, while on the poop
Pac'd the impatient Captain; for 't is clear
That yonder vessel, turning quick with fear,

FRANCISCO.

Is the deep galleon, bound to farthest east,
From Mexique's coast, and at the very least
Has in her hold a million coins of eight,
And golden pieces, a most precious freight.
Large, deep, and wide this Spanish galleon is,
And quick upon her keel; but yet, I wis,
Those pirate ships, with lines more deftly laid,
And broader spars and canvas overhead,
Will step the ocean with a larger stride,
Will keener push its foamy crests aside.

But soon the waves are tipped no more with snow,
The fickle winds sing softly now, and low,
Their morning anthems. Tardy as the hand
Which brings relief, the ships sail on and stand
Towards the galleon, sailing still more slow;
The hot sun, climbing to the topmost bow
And summit of the arch of caverned space,
Spangles with dancing light the passive face

FRANCISCO.

And breathing bosom of the warm-veined sea,
Like golden poppies strewn upon the lea,
And warm south pastures stretching from the base
Of woody hills lapped by a grassy space.
Once more the sails flap 'gainst the creaking mast,
The helmsman idly gapes, and now at last
A torrid calm creeps o'er the sleeping blue,
So lately gladsome as the breezes flew.
Three hours go by, when, slowly mounting high,
A misty cloud-wall fills the eastern sky,
Along its front the blackened waters curl,
As sweeps the furious wind in maddened swirl.
Quick to his post each man of that swart crew
Runs though not ordered, ready to upclew
And furl close to the yard the drooping sail,
For well he knew that all too soon the wail
And rage of that black squall, sucked from the deep
By the unclouded sun, would o'er them sweep.
Brief the orders, following sharp and hard,
The upper sails are furled, and ev'ry yard

FRANCISCO.

Braced steady, ere the quick, short puffs of wind,
As venturous scouts, tell that close behind
The tramping hosts of war are in their rear,
And boldly hurry on, untouched by fear.
Then, as a million furies from the clouds,
The howling winds rush through the tarry shrouds,
Seize on the burly ships and lay them o'er
Flaccid as sea-weed cast on sandy shore;
Trembling in ev'ry timber, prone they lie
Against the flattened sea, and far and nigh
The darkened waters, laced with foamy streaks,
Lie sullen, heaving 'neath these sudden freaks.
The Spanish galleon, eager in her flight,
With sheeted canvas high and wide was dight,
But, rash from fear, kept ev'ry sail in place
To catch the sudden squall in its mad race.
Oh, foolish ship! Oh, foolish, fearful men!
The wind snaps mast and brittle spar, and then
Those snowy wings hang drooping in the tide,
And tangled cordage beats against the side.

FRANCISCO.

The Commandante pales with sudden fright
A moment only, then with sturdy might
Seizes an axe and calls upon the crew
With him to cut away the stays, and hew
The broken topmast from its solid bed
And iron footing at the foremast head;
To cut each stay which holds a dragging spar,
That, loosed from bondage, it may float afar.
The crew obeys; some mount the swaying mast,
And clanging strokes resound above the blast;
Some cut the cordage clinging to the sail
Limp as dead tendrils drooping o'er the rail.
Sail, mast and rope soon float upon the sea,
Dead, severed branches from a lofty tree.
The winds abate; the cloud melts into rain,
Shooting slant arrows at the helpless main;
Bright golden light presses the eastern marge
Of the retreating storm-cloud, black and large,
Which rolls off to the west, a lofty wall
Of whirling mist, ocean's funeral pall.

FRANCISCO.

Once more the sea takes on the richest hue
And deepest color of the cloud-flecked blue.
The galleon still is pressing to the west,
For ev'ry man had labored without rest
To rig the jury-mast and clear the wreck,
Spreading all sail from topmast to the deck.
And now they prayed that with the steady breeze
Which blew from out the east, it fain would please
The Holy Mother, almoner of hope,
To guard them well, and let them fairly cope
In wingèd speed with those red buccaneers
Who filled those western seas with blood and tears.
Thus men will ever pray when in sore strait,
Believing that the iron hand of fate
Will weave a special thread from out the woof
And colored warp of life, in their behoof.
How vain their prayers! 'T is fashioned as a whole,
As but a grain of dust is one, poor soul,
Upon that rattling loom, which ever moves
And weaves its web in fixed, eternal grooves.

FRANCISCO.

The Cora and the Cygnet, when they spied
Afar the black-faced squall, then quickly hied
To furl all sails, for well long years had taught
Those rovers how, with sudden danger fraught,
Comes o'er the laughing sea the darkling cloud,
An exhaled monster, spumous and black-browed.
Now shiv'ring in the blast the two ships lie,
Nor do the red-breeched sailors whine or cry,
But laugh aloud, and, watching, grasp the rail,
Well pleased to see the blast wrench mast and sail,
And play such wanton tricks and ruthless strow
Disasters many on the Spanish foe.
And when the misty storm-cloud rolled away,
And on its breezy track flashed golden day,
The Cygnet and the Cora haste to spread
And sheet close home the canvas overhead;
Then straight towards the foe their courses take,
The foaming waters dancing in their wake.

FRANCISCO.

In one short hour the ships are all abreast,
The English flag upon the twain;
The Spaniard answers not, but to the west
Presses his dripping prow in vain.
A shot flies hissing near the galleon's mast,
A messenger of sharpest tone,
Telling the Commandante that at last
Hope lies in sturdy arms alone;
The curling battle-smoke, the stunning roar,
The sulph'rous breath from cannon throats,
The crashing shots, the fierce shouts rising o'er
Diapason of battle's notes.
The galleon's masts are gone; a helpless wreck,
She rests upon the smoky wave,
But still her flag floats o'er the bloody deck,
The sad defiance of the brave.
The English ships now grapple to her side;
Their red-breeched sailors, sword in hand,
Rush o'er the rails, unchecked, a raging tide,
Poured fiercely on that weary band.

FRANCISCO.

First Ralph Wollasten touched the slipp'ry deck,
The Cygnet's captain, Ralph the Red;
Low-browed, short-statured, with a virile neck,
A heart whence pity long had fled.
His keen-edged blade was grasped with iron grip,
His hoarse voice rose above the fray:
"Come on," he cried. "Come on; the Spanish ship,
Brave men, is surely ours to-day."
The Cora's crew next, like to agile goats,
That, springing, climb to cloudy peaks,
Scaled the steep side, shouting with lusty throats,
As sportive boys, in noonday freaks.
Before them all, leading the very van,
A gaunt and bony man was there,
Long-faced, black caverned eyes; a crafty man,
Subtile and bold to think and dare;
The Cora's captain, Richard Bell, was he.
Pistol in hand, a dangling sword
Hung from his wrist. Arm firm, throat bare and free,
He led his crew without a word.

FRANCISCO.

As when two rushing torrents meet a third,
 Foaming along a rocky wall,
Then, far through quiet leafy woods is heard
 The wat'ry tumult rise and fall.
So on the deck was poured the living flood.
 There, crowding round the shattered mast,
Shoulder to shoulder, sad, the Spaniards stood,
 Ready to die, for hope was past.
Dead men were plenteous, scattered here and there,
 With upturned eyeballs glaring wide,
And crimson rivulets flowed everywhere.
 Out through the scuppers, down the side.
Instant the clangor of contending steel,
 Sharp pistol shots and powder glare,
Hoarse shouts, deep moans, rose mingling peal on peal,
 Up through the tropic, sunny air.
But soon a bullet shot by Ralph the Red,
 Pierced through the Commandante's brain;
A moment's tremor ran from foot to head,
 Then down he sank among the slain.

FRANCISCO.

Now sudden panic seized on ev'ry man,
And nerveless was the Spanish crew.
Some down the hatch, some up the rigging ran;
Some out upon the bowsprit flew.
The fight was quickly won. Smiles curled each lip,
As those swart buccaneers gazed round,
For they had taken a huge Spanish ship,
An argosy deep freighted, eastward bound.

Forth from the cabin, held by brawny grip,
Came a lean monk with shaven head,
With ashy cheek and bloodless livid lip,
The tell tales of his mortal dread.
Slow pacing after, led with gentle care,
Came a sad lady steeped in woe.
Pallid she was with black, dishevelled hair,
And eyes whence tears had ceased to flow ;

FRANCISCO.

And there she stood among the livid dead,
Large-eyed and tall. Majestic grace
Touched ev'ry line of bosom, neck and head.
With swelling beauty's softest trace,
She slowly turned about ; her lustrous gaze
Swept o'er the living and the slain,
And saw the Commandante, with amaze,
Dead on the deck, with oozing brain.
Then sudden grief o'ercame her and again
The fountain of her tears would ope,
But she, with trembling lip, did them restrain,
For pride with hopeless grief did cope.
Then Ralph the Red thus spoke with sneering lip:
" Didst shrive the Commandante well,
Thou sleek-faced, lank-paunched monk, ere from this ship
His passage took straight down to hell ?"
The monk replied not, but the lady said :
" Of brave men, brave men speak not so.
Liar thou, to heaven my husband dead
Is gone, where thou can never go."

FRANCISCO.

The buccaneer with taunting words replied:

“My lady fair, how sharp thy tongue.

Such words to favored lover at thy side

Would not be said by one so young.”

“Who fears the living and insults the dead

Is coward base,” the lady cried.

“No words of love could speak, but I instead

With scorn would drive him from my side.”

The bitter scorn which lurked in ev’ry word

Stung to the soul the buccaneer.

He strode towards her with uplifted sword,

But she moved not, nor quailed with fear.

He halts a moment; e’en his brutal heart

Gives pause to passion’s ruthless flow.

He feels an instant the unmanly part

To strike a helpless woman so.

A moment more the thrice unwelcome thought

Is strangled with untimely check.

He lifts to strike. Across his arm is brought

A blow; the sword drops to the deck.

FRANCISCO.

He turned about and saw 't was Richard Bell
Had stepped between him and his prey.
With husky voice he said, "Thou son of hell,
I'll quickly make thee rue this day."
And, stooping, took his sword, which glittering lay,
A bar of light amidst the blood;
Turned on his heel, nor other words did say,
But thrust at Richard where he stood.
His arm was nerveless from the sudden blow,
And answered not his anger wild;
Scarce holds the blade, but weak, uncertain, slow,
As the soft tendons of a child,
Else had the eager blade, by venom urged,
Pierced the warm centre of his life,
And from those southern seas one more had purged
Of those who vexed them with their strife.
Then Richard, quickly as that spotted beast
Which roams the jungle's tangled screen,
Sprang forward, sword upraised, when then at least
A score of blades did intervene.

FRANCISCO.

And each was rudely seized and led aside
And firmly held by sturdy men,
Who with brusque, angry voices both did chide,
Telling the twain what might have been.
First Richard said: "Come, call a hearty truce,
Let not a woman's sulky mood
Breed bitter strife 'tween comrades; little use
For idle words to spill our blood."
Ralph, muttering, answered: "But then the blow,
The insulting blow. Still, you're right;
A truce it is. We're friends; 't is foolish now
Upon this deck, and won this fight."
The feud was quelled, but only as the fire
Shrinks in the crater's depths below,
Ready to burst, and seething, mounting higher,
Sweep all before the lava's flow.
Then all save priest and lady forth are led,
Sad band, upon the Cora's deck;
The victor's cast foes wounded and the dead
Into the sea from off the wreck;

FRANCISCO.

Soon clear the tackle, spread the sails below,
Stay up the masts, as then was meet,
Then to the east the galleon's haughty prow
Urge slowly on to join the fleet.
The three ships meet and sail towards the east,
On slowly through the starry night;
Along the deck, loud wassail, wine and feast,—
Below, despair, salt tears, and fright.

Meantime, one ship, with canvas in the brails,
And idle crew gaping along the rails,
Remains behind, sails slowly up and down,
To watch on fortune's fickle smile or frown,
And aid or succor give, if need might be,
Or follow if the stranger ship should flee.
One gazes o'er the waters from its side,
Or walks the polished deck with measured stride,
Graceful and lithe as Eucalyptus tree,
Swayed by a gentle air from Southern sea.

FRANCISCO.

His bosom broad and deep; his sloping flank;
His step elastic, pacing o'er the plank,
Are eloquent of strength, of lusty prime,
When youth's first ardent flush is fled. What time
The music of sad thought with low refrain
Fills the wide chambers of the eager brain;
And ling'ring still, though rosy-fingered youth
Still clasped him in her warm embrace, in truth,
The hues of bitter woe, with devious trace,
Had seamed and scarred too soon that youthful face;
E'en silvered threads were woven here and there
Through the dark auburn of his clustered hair;
And deep brown eyes, with introverted fires,
Hid smould'ring grief, love, hate, and fierce desires.
He paced the deck, a solitary man,
The swart crew aloof full many a span;
For Captain of those buccaneers was he,
Francisco Derwent, known on ev'ry sea,
Both east and west, within the tropic sweep
Of Capricorn and Cancer's farthest deep.

FRANCISCO.

No Spanish cit, within his red-roofed town,
But heard his hated name with trembling frown;
No crew spread sail upon the sunny air,
But gave to holy saint a secret prayer;
No Indian lurked within his forest bower,
But hoped the Spaniard yet might feel his power.

Thus, while he paced and gazed on sea and skies,
A youth came to the side and gazed likewise.
His deep blue eye, his round and rosy face,
His laughing mouth, his brow without a trace
Of blighting care, his form of compact power,
Marked brimming youth, that loved the passing hour.
Francisco saw the youth, and thus he said:
“What think you, Edgar; will the foe ahead
Of our good ships still keep his coward flight,
Or shall we soon be gladdened with the sight
Of his tall spars and hull a helpless wreck,
And all the guarded treasures on our deck?”

FRANCISCO.

Then Edgar said, still gazing far away:
“No doubt but ere the sun goes down this day,
The Cygnet and the Cora will run down
And take the Spanish ship ere she has flown
Without the reach of plunging shot and shell,
And brawny arms that do their work so well.
Oh! how I long to mingle with the rest,
Who now pursue the foe towards the west.
Why, sir, 't is hard to keep me thus tied here,
As though I am a woman, pale with fear.”
Francisco answered: “True, almost a boy,
But yet thy valor is without alloy.
Thy station here, thy duty is to stay;
Restrain thy ardor for another day.
Full many hardships, many fights will be,
Ere we can scatheless reach the Carib sea.”
The flattered youth with blithesome words replied;
And thus they talked while leaning o'er the side,
Talking and gazing till each hull of ship
Gradual sank below the horizon's dip;

FRANCISCO.

Then turned away, and while they stood at ease,
Young Edgar said: "And pray, sir, will it please
You now to tell the story of your life,
And how you fell into this round of strife;
And, still more strange, how 't was, and where and when,
You came to be so feared by Spanish men?
You may remember how, a month ago,
One stormy night, when pacing to and fro,
I kept the middle watch, you left your bed,
And, haggard, came on deck, and then you said,
That hateful recollections filled your brain,
And thronged across its portals, loathsome train;
And when I asked the reason why 't was so,
You sadly answered, then I could not know;
Some other day, the whole you would unfold,
And then those crowding mem'ries would be told."
Francisco answered: "Yes, sometimes at night,
When howls the storm, or when, perchance, the light
Of golden stars is glittering in this arch
Which spans the restless sea, where ceaseless march

FRANCISCO.

The thronging worlds through universal space,
Or when the patient moon doth interlace
With silver threads the crests of billows low,
Which hoarsely dash against our dipping prow,
The bitter woes, which all too soon unstrung
My tensioned life of youth, and from it wrung
My inmost faith in human truth and life,
And drove me to this baleful rack of strife,
Come trooping back, impetuously strong,
O'ermast'ring my poor will, relentless throng.
What sadder thing, then, when youth's amber light
Of joyous morn is flushed with all the bright
And lucent hopes, and trust and living faith,
Which drive life's shadows to the gates of death,
That faithless love, that chilly mists of wrong,
A brother's treach'rous hate, and all the long
And bitter train of woes, should sudden rise,
And blur the skyward gaze of hope's young eyes?

FRANCISCO.

My father was of Britain; from its isle
A boy he sailed, to woo fair fortune's smile;
Saw many lands; for many years did roam;
At last in sunny Spain he found a home.
'T was there a dark-eyed maid, with bounteous love,
O'erwhelmed his truant heart, and though he strove
To stem love's tide, as oft he had before,
Its subtile waters steeped him to the core.
A sturdy man he was, bold, agile, strong,
Of earnest mind, who hated ruth and wrong,
And hoary shams; to whom, as equal dross,
The faith of Turk, or Jew, or Christian cross;
But yet concealed, for bloody is the hand
That throttles doubting thought in ev'ry land.
No martyr's fate he sought, so took the hue
Of any faith, when safety gave the cue.
But cynic doubt, with bitter gall o'erfraught,
Tinctured the hidden sources of his thought.
Busied with life and all its swarming deeds,
He gathered golden store for future needs.

FRANCISCO.

Pliant and facile to the hour
Sought not the thorn, but plucked the flower.
To me alone, though youngest to him born,
He told the thought that in his soul had worn,
But only half as glancing sidelong light
Through intermittent darkness tells how bright
In darksome gorges down below,
The crystal waters silent flow.
So, less by what was said than what inferred,
My nascent mind to deepest depths was stirred.
And thus I yearly grew, although a lad,
Wondering, doubting, questioning, sad.
My mother, trusting soul, her budding years,
With priestly wiles and superstitious fears
Was grossly fed, and like a woman still,
Her heart took captive her too plastic will.
She poured her loving soul at Mary's feet,
Sure that in heaven, to her, it was to mete
Eternal joy or woe, and that at least
To loose or bind was given to shaven priest.

FRANCISCO.

And when her eldest born, a puling boy,
Lay on her breast she dreamed with secret joy
How when a man, anointed by the hand
Of holy bishop, he would meekly stand
Before the altar 'neath some vaulted nave,
Where upward to the groined arch, the wave
Of heavy incense slowly floats away,
Athwart the mottled sunshine's broken ray.
The dream became resolve ; each potent art
A mother's care can force to play its part
Into his vacant brain had daily poured
The distillations of the priestly horde.
A narrow jaundiced man Taddeo grew,
The sombre alleys of whose soul ne'er knew
The teeming joys of youth, the bounding blood,
The airy hopes, the evil mixed with good ;
A priest became, devoted to the scheme
Of Mother Church, and had no other dream.

FRANCISCO.

I grew apace my father's joy and pride,
But not my mother's. Always at his side,
I drank the secret rills of sceptic thought,
And, unawares, soon knew that there is naught
So god-like as the bold, untrammelled swing
Of mortal mind, where'er it seeks to wing
Its unrestricted flight to distant crests,
And heights where purest truth forever rests.
The years went on; to Salamanca's halls
Of learning I was sent. Within its walls,
Of Aristotle's and the schoolmen's lore,
I studied much, but did not shut the door
Against the pressing throng and boisterous sway
Of youthful passions, which must have their day.
At last my father died. Oh! how the tide
From eyes and heart poured forth, when at the side
Of his low grave, yellow with autumn grass,
The trooping mem'ries silently would pass
Of how he loved me. Oh! generous heart,
How wise, sagacious. Apt with ev'ry art

FRANCISCO.

That sways men's souls and yet conceals,
Where needful, what one thinks or feels ;
But more than all, sweet sympathy's refrain,
Spreading from heart to heart, from brain to brain,
A voiceless harmony, a silent song,
Vibrations inarticulate but strong.

Within my father's house an upper floor
A quiet chamber had, with oaken door
And gliding bolts ; the room five paces wide,
Low-ceiled. Deep cleft upon the other side
A narrow window was, whose leaded panes
Looked on green tree-tops, shaded, leafy fanes,
Where feathered choristers sang all day long
With bubbling throats, a blithesome, cheery throng.
Here oft when busy cares of day were o'er,
My father sat, and through the night would pore
O'er thick-ribbed volumes, or in thought would sit,
Until the amber morn the east had lit.

FRANCISCO.

And I, when death had ta'en him, daily there
Would wend my steps to breathe its placid air,
And take in thoughts of him and what he'd taught.
Now, as one morn an upper shelf I sought
To find a missing book, methought I saw
Behind the row the outline of a door.
T'was small and locked, but then I found at last
The key that oped this door, now closed so fast.
Within the dim recess a book I found
With tarnished clasps and yellow parchment bound.
Then down descended and with eager scan,
O'er pregnant title and rich pages ran.
The book was Bruno's, that Italian friar
Who scorned his early faith and though in fire
Was ruthless tortured, nor with radiant eye
With hope lit up could look beyond the sky
To heav'nly bliss, as compensation late
For all the tears and woes of martyr's fate.
But firm believed, the individual soul
At death melts in the universal whole ;

FRANCISCO.

Would not recant, but to himself was true,
When fiery pains of death were piercing through.
I read the book. It was as if a door
Into new chambers oped with richest store,
Forgot by men, where thoughts like treasures tempt
The hungry mind with bounty yet undreamt.
And now I knew and fully understood
The fecund bed of doubt, and why the brood
Of covert hints, mistrusts, had daily flown
From my dear father's mind into my own.
How narrow then seemed bigot churchman's creed,
How falsely fair, how far from that great need,
Which craves for truth where'er or what it be,
As restless brooks and rivers crave the sea.
I read how God and matter are but one,
How all this universe from central sun,
Unseen by us, which, through etherial space,
With myriad worlds pursues its circling race,
E'en to the atom floating viewless past,
Are interfused with God, are God at last.

FRANCISCO.

How all is one, and the great One is all,
Filling each particular great and small.
That man himself, so by himself adored,
A form is of this universal Lord.
Just as the flower, the rock, the bird that sings,
And all the grosser forms of earthy things,
Save that to him an added joy is given ;
The mind that upward soars the needed heaven,
To purge obstruction from the native pause,
Which stays our rising to great Nature's cause.
That sensual longings, spirits essence, too,
Commingled strangely, mortal life indue,
But that the finer parts, etherial, free,
Are links that join us to divinity.
And when at last we sicken and decay,
This finer essence finds eternal day
In that great One, vast reservoir of soul,
The which is God, the one, the all, the whole."
"What doctrine strange!" quoth Edgar, who had sat
And listened to Francisco, and thereat

FRANCISCO.

Much wondered, as his callow, simple mind
Was all unused to doctrines thus refined
From crucibles of philosophic thought.
“The only faith I know or e’er was taught,
And that but little, was of Church, of cross;
Of heaven, of burning hell, how Christ’s great loss
Was our great gain; but this a puzzle seems
Which you propound, an idle stretch of dreams.”
Francisco answered grave: “The puzzle real
Is how, for ages, priests and church could steal
Men’s brains away; could at its very source
Stop keen perception up, and from their course
Turn speculation and the speech of men;
Could bind and chain them in their prison pen.

FRANCISCO.

But to my tale. The wingèd days flew by
On airy pinions, and as each one came,
I sought this mystic volume as a flame
Illumining all things of earth and sky
With clearest light projected far and nigh.
But then, you know, 't is hard in youth to tame
The strong, rebellious passions which do maim
Young life, with lover's hopes, with lover's sigh;
And so with me. There was in neighb'ring street
A merchant rich; of thrift and crafty wiles,
Who rose from penury; loved money's power;
He many daughters had, but one more sweet,
To me, at least, whose girlish grace, arch smiles,
Drove bookish lore away, and filled each hour
With troublous dreams of love;

FRANCISCO.

. and so at last,
The book forgot, I daily wandered past
Her window, jutting o'er the busy street,
Or hast'ning early, with no laggard feet,
To morning mass, would, in the sculptured aisle,
Feign rapt devotion, but would yet the while
Gaze on her beauty as she knelt in prayer,
And think no maiden ever was so fair.
Carlotta knew, before I spoke a word,
That love was in my eyes, and she toward
The place I knelt would sidelong glances throw;
For was there ever maiden did not know
The voiceless glance of love, or could not feel
It's burning ray or hear its mute appeal?
Mute was the language, but of pregnant strength
That shot from eye to eye until at length
Unrest brought speech and speech to numbers turned
In verses where my boyish ardor burned,
In halting lines which barely half expressed
The passion that my gaze had all confessed.

FRANCISCO.

By craft, the missive came into her hand,
How laggard then the hour-glass' slipping sand?
How my expectant heart trembled with pain,
Delicious pain, wishing it could attain
The topmost round of hope, beckoned by love,
That peeped from ev'ry glance, from ev'ry move,
And then the morrow, when to church I hied,
And in her face responsive love espied.
The secret meeting 'neath the garden wall :
The hasty vows, the parting kiss, the all
That in the compass of an hour can strain,
Enough to tincture all a life with pain,
Were mine. And as have many men before,
And will hereafter very many more,
I thought a woman's love the truest thing
Of all on earth, that poets sweetly sing.
Vain songs ; in woman's heart there deeply lurks
A pliant strain, which, when the tempest works,
Is blown to shreds of weakness, and gives up
To ease and quiet, e'en love's chalice cup.

FRANCISCO.

Meantime my brother artfully put on
A seeming love for me, and thus he won
A way into my heart. He questioned me
Of various matters, and I, frank and free,
Told all I thought, especially the doubt
Of Mother Church, her dogmas, faiths, without
Concealing aught. I told of Bruno's book,
Where found, how read, and how from it I took
New thoughts of life and death, and all the plan
Of circling worlds; of nature and of man.
I told of our dear father's inward life,
That obverse side, which not to son or wife,
And none save me, its thoughts and doubts had bared,
How by his questionings I was prepared
To seize the marrow of the skeptic page,
To look on naked truth, nor aught assuage.
Oh! trust of youth, an airy, fleeting span,
A bridge of gossamer o'er gulphs that yawn.
Taddeo hated, though a pallid smile
Of seeming love lit up his face the while.

FRANCISCO.

Straight to the Inquisition there was borne
By him each word I spoke, but subtly shorn
Of reservations. I was pictured there
As one whom brother's love e'en could not spare,—
An infidel, whom holy mercy urged,
Should of his deadly sins by fire be purged.
The accusation made, the order went
That I to closest dungeon should be sent,
There to be questioned in the usual way
And urged by gentle thumbscrews, I should say
Who taught, and whether others with me drank
These waters from heretic fountains rank.
Taddeo hastened with malignant heart
To tell our mother how he 'd played his part.
Stunned though she was, she did not weep nor cower,
But sent for me to come within the hour.
I went. My mother sat within her room,
And my quick eye could see through twilight gloom
But cold repulsion, not the beaming trace
Of mother's bounteous love upon her face.

FRANCISCO.

Scarce closed the door ere with sibillant hiss
She taunted me, asked if 't had come to this
That her own son, led in the strictest way,
And taught a holy faith from day to day,
Now scorned the church, was now a very Turk,
An infidel, to do the devil's work.
And then she told me all Taddeo said,
Ending at last with curses on my head.
At first amazed I stood with downcast head,
Nor stayed the biting taunts, but there instead
Waited the pause, when breath and rage were weak,
To tell the truth, my inmost thought to speak ;
But when I heard the unnatural curse,
I staggered in my steps. Could there be worse?
Essayed to speak, but nerveless was my tongue,
It was as if its tenderest chord was stung,
Turned back upon my heart the boiling flood
Of raging passion coursing in my blood.
I could not speak but turned me to the door,
Strode from the room nor saw my mother more.

FRANCISCO.

Forth in the murky night I took my way,
Nor heeded whether darkness was or day.
Burdened with thoughts that tore my inmost soul,
I turned me to the trysting-place, that goal
Where day and night my thoughts of love had flown,
Where all the seeds of my young hope were sown ;
But first beneath Carlotta's window gave
The trysting signal, a sweet minstrel stave.
The stars looked coldly down with trembling glance
Upon the quiet town, but did not chance
To spy the angle near the garden gate
Where close I stood, Carlotta to await.
She came. I told her all. Poured the hot tide
Of passion's speech, which at my mother's side
Had filled my choking heart, but found no vent.
At last I paused, for words were wholly spent.
She spoke not. Silence stilled the restless breeze.
Then that prescience which makes a lover seize
The unshaped thoughts ere into life they start
Within the recess of his mistress' heart,

FRANCISCO.

And moulds them into words that oft are fell
As fiery hail in lowest pits of hell,
Told me she loved not, never yet had loved,
That only fancy had her being moved,
Blossoms upon the surface of her heart,
Which grew not from the inner part.
Like lurid lightning o'er the darkened main,
These thoughts flashed sudden through my troubled brain.
At last she laughed. How hollow was the laugh!
Stript of love's kernel it was naught but chaff.
She told me then that never could she love
A recusant to Church ordained above;
That if my faith was as I had gone o'er,
'T was right that to the Inquisition's door
I should be dragged and humble penance make,
Or, if denying, suffer at the stake,—
That what had passed must henceforth be forgot;
Her life was one, mine was another lot.
I had but feigned a love, when all the while
'Twas but the nursing of a wicked guile.

FRANCISCO.

And then she turned and fled within the gate.
Oh ! coward soul that dared not adverse fate.
An Arctic chillness compassed me around,
Nor word articulate, nor any sound
Left my pale lips, but there against that wall
Long, weary hours I leaned till the black pall
Of smoky night was lifted towards the east,
Then thoughts came slow as guests go from a feast.
Sorrows like these temper our plastic wills
To steely trueness for life's struggling ills ;
Poise the unsteady brain, and with the sweep
Of plummet reach the soul's profoundest deep.
I turned away, grown in that little hour
From facile youth to manhood's rigid power.
Enough. My tale too sad to tell it through.
Hunted I was by Church and brother, too,
I skulked through towns or in the herbage dank,
When chilly night closed down, exhausted sank.
At last from Spain I came to English soil.
Abjured my country, sought a life of toil.
Bereft of home I turned me towards the west,
Amid these surging seas made fortune's quest.

FRANCISCO.

My home was gone, and now no more the dream
That in the quiet of the lazy years
Lapped on as 't were a dull and sluggish stream,
With gentle ripples of domestic fears,
Or joys, that repetition dulled too soon;
A Lethean stream, full to its very slopes
With sleepy waters, and thick overstrown
With shrivelled buds of scorched hopes,
That bloomed but for an hour upon its banks forlorn.

FRANCISCO.

She that I thought would with demonstrive joy
Look from her eyes a daily placid love;
That icy mood or chill could not destroy,
But ever move along the self-same groove,
Is now a dream to me, a brooding cloud,
That darkens dreary, and with gloom is rife,
Pouring along life's arid ways a crowd
Of demon thoughts, that by continued strife
Make me to hourly loathe the once dear hopes of life.

FRANCISCO.

Fleet were youth's hours, brimming o'er with dreaming
Of tropic isles, of seas of deepest blue;
Sleeping on, where southern stars are beaming
With rhythmic breathings old, but ever new;
Of tawny mountains, rim'd with fleecy frost,
With sloping, grassy sides, and palm-tree base,
Where, in the shadows, silent brooks are lost,
And gaudy butterflies each other chase,
And the blue dome above by storm is never crossed;

FRANCISCO.

Of poet's fame; of the dim, far-off heights
Where truth reclines. My soul reached everywhere
For beauty, that should gloss the common sights,
The dull routine, the city's stony glare ;
Where my pent youth wasted its rosy bloom.
Oh! what a youth was that,—a fretful youth,
That chafed against its iron bit of doom,
Nor heeded wisdom's saws. The common truth,
That plodding duty eases best life's path of gloom ;

FRANCISCO.

How fair she was ! Her great dark eyes were wet
With the soft dew of bashful maidenhood ;
And I, oh simple one ! who had not yet
Learned that the sea of youth, when at the flood,
Drowns love, deemed that with her I ever could
Feed on love's bounty, knowing not how soon
The lusty years put on their sullen mood ;
How he who revels in the torrid noon,
Weary at last, turns towards eve's sweet placid boon.

But what cared I ? The double sight of youth
Saw in the girl, herself, and also more ;
Ecstatic love, the deathless faith, the truth
That filled my soul,—love's mystic lore ;
And ere a Summer's moons had ceased, she bore
My heart away. Alas ! Oh, what a heap
Of withered hopes have strewn the barren shore
Of life ! How, step by step, I've climbed its steep,
And daily seen illusions fade, too sad to weep ;

FRANCISCO.

How, year by year, this purple morn became
The brassy glare of noon, when all things seem
Shrunk to truth, and she is not the same
That I had dreamed she was in my young dream ;
And I, in daily strife, began to deem
That all of life was in the sordid power
That golden lucre gives ; that ev'ry scheme
The busy brain conceives, e'en for an hour, [shower.
Should breed, though ruth and discord reign, a golden

FRANCISCO.

How hourly mused I, that it sure could be,
That the dull dross of life to solid gold
Could thus be molten by love's alchemy.
Her well-deep eyes had drawn, with sudden hold,
Myself from out myself. Who could have told,
But me, their craft? Imperious, cruel eyes!
Can I forget? Oh, no! But I could flee,
And sink away, and breathe protesting sighs,
Sighing with pain, and dying as the night-wind dies.

FRANCISCO.

The teeming earth, the heavy air, the breeze
That crept from perfumed flower to flower,
Surcharged with her, filled every sense, as bees
Laden with sweets when murky rain-clouds lower.
Alas! 't is gone ; and now, why should I cower,
And weakly tremble like a lurking thief,
Who basely filches a poor widow's dower?
Was 't not my love? Or, in that hour so brief,
Did I another's jewel wear? Oh, sad belief!

FRANCISCO.

Oh, no ! it cannot be. Is life so vain,
That trust and faith and hope are blotted quite
From off its page ? That ev'ry pulse is pain ?
That sunny hours but hide the starless night ?
That pitchy darkness stalks behind the light ?
No, I'll not think it ; but in ev'ry face
Will see but truth, will revel in love's might.
The tendrils of my heart shall interlace,
And clasp its mem'ries sad, and to leave to doubt no place.

FRANCISCO.

Now, boy, you know the very secret springs
Which urge me on to gloomy, bloody things.
I tell thee, Edgar, woman 's but a fool,
But fit for luxury, priest's shallow tool.
Trust not her heart, 't will play thee any turn;
Be true if all goes well, but surely spurn
Thee quickly, if the adverse tides of fate
Should turn and sweep against thee soon or late ;
And as for priests, hucksters of feeble souls,
Barring the way to heaven to levy tolls,
I deem 't a debt due to my brother man
To sweep them from the earth whene'er I can."

And now the three ships meet and sail away
Towards the east all night until the day ;
All night the sleepy waves athwart the ship
Strike the curved bows that slowly rise and dip.

FRANCISCO.

Oh! what a night is this; far, far away,
The starry worlds, still as I eager scan,
Retreat in space. Oh! that they would betray
Their secrets, or disclose the wondrous plan
That fashions all, or tell when time began,
And whither tends this turbid, fretful tide
Of life. Whether its flow is for a span,
Or moves it on, though here on earth has died
Its current, shrunk to nothing from its margin wide.

FRANCISCO.

Once more the tropic morn, lusty and bright,
Springs from the eastern deep, a glorious sight.
Francisco mounts the deck and gazes wide,
Then calls the burly boatswain to his side,
Speaks in his ear, and soon the whistle's call
Brings a boat's crew, who lower from the fall
The captain's gig. Across the placid swell
Francisco guides, the crew pull strong and well.
The galleon reached, Francisco mounts the deck;
The gruff lieutenant hastens at his beck.
Together to the cabin they descend,
Where all is still, save as the timbers blend
Their mournful creaking with the swashing thud
Of stern descending in the gaping flood.
O'erhead the ceiling, at the sides each door,
Gleam with bright woods culled from remotest shore
Of Honduras, where parasitic vines
Darken the forest aisles; where fiercely shines
The torrid sun on bosky margins green
And verdurous in their glimmering sheen,

FRANCISCO.

Within whose shadows ripples gently lave
The pebbly beach with green, translucent wave.
Polished and carved, and od'rous as the spray
From founts of Samarcand and far Cathay.
Upon the floor were strewn, two deep, at least,
Thick rugs from Persia and the far-off east,
Whose borders, purple, white, and crimson red,
With central yellows mingled, deftly fed
The languid eye with soft, luxurious hue,
Like budding roses tipped with morning dew.
A mirror spanned the cabin's farther end,
Broad divans filled the counter's curving trend.
In recess, arched, a silver censer swung ;
Within, the Virgin Mary's picture hung,
Painted by one taught by Murillo's art,
Who on the canvas spread his bleeding heart.
An altar near, a crucifix displayed,
Telling a woman's refuge when she prayed.
A mandolin lay on a lacquered stand,
A book,—some sheets of music near at hand.

FRANCISCO.

Francisco gazed, and when his wand'ring eye
Fell on the altar, with the censer nigh,
A sullen cloudy frown spread o'er his face,
But soon died out, and fading, left no trace.
He mounts the stairs, no bloody pools or trace
Of that fierce combat, sullied now the face
Of whitened decks; the coiled ropes were hung
Each in its place. Aloft the canvas flung
Its bellying tension to the humid wind,
And the long wake gleamed in the sun behind.
An order brief Francisco gave, and soon
A signal flag goes up, and when outflown,
To all the Captains of the ships did say
To board the galleon's decks without delay.
They swiftly come and silently await,
Grouped on the quarter deck, what he shall state.
A moment's pause, and then the chieftain said,
"This ship, whose decks we now as victors tread,
Is the King's ship, that yearly takes its way
Manilla-ward from Acapulco bay.

FRANCISCO.

'Tis very rich, a million dollars told
Would scarcely equal what is in this hold.
Now fortune's with us, we'll divide the spoil,
And with our riches,—fruit of blood and toil,—
Sail our good ships to Amapilla bay ;
There burn their hulls and landward take our way
To Carib seas, and thence to Europe's shore,
Where peace awaits us, all our battles o'er.”
All gave assent, and soon the list prepared
Of gold and silver treasure to be shared.
Spoils of many a peaceful vessel tracked
O'er lonely seas, or village rudely sacked,
Or hacienda, rich with past'ral wealth,
Wasted and stripped of all with bloody stealth ;
And then with wordy strife and jest they say
The share of each at Amapilla bay.
Now Ralph the Red spoke up with rasping voice :
“ Where are the prisoners, I wish my choice
Of priest or woman, for to my brave crew
And me, the capture of this ship is due ! ”

FRANCISCO.

Francisco orders gave that they should lead
The pris'ners both on deck, of fetters freed.
Then turns him round to scan the ships near by,
Rising and falling 'gainst the cloud-flecked sky.
The rest are mute, while from the hold below,
The captives mount the ladder, sad and slow ;
Between the guards they stand ; pictures of woe.
The priest's gaunt face, unshaved, a creamy white
Mottled with blue, had grown a dolorous sight.
His furtive eyes glanced o'er the swarthy group,
To mercy spy, if ever in that troop
Of swart barbarians its frail bud could bloom ;
But 'twas not there ; he read his bitter doom.
The lady quailed not ; the unclouded ray
Of her dark eyes trembled nor turned away ;
Her falling tresses fringed, as does the night,
The pearly morn ere stars have ta'en their flight,
The pallid olive of her face. Ah! there
Was woe, but haughty woe, unblanched by fear.
Her form erect, rounded with flexile grace
As nymph of fabled Amazonian race.

FRANCISCO.

Apart she stood, nor heeded muttered jest
From lips of those rude men but half expressed.
Francisco all the while leaned o'er the side ;
His vacant eyes were wand'ring idly wide,
And clouded in deep thought, nor heeded sound
Of captives' coming steps, nor turned him round,
Until the hoarse-voiced mate had to him said,
"Here, sir, the pris'ners are." He turned his head,
An instant paused ; upon that pallid face
Gazes once more amazed, steps forth a pace,
Then stops, advances, trembling as the leaf
Of quiv'ring aspen ; for an instant brief
Halts on the threshold of his lips and dies
His feeble, stamm'ring voice ; thought from him flies,—
But hoarsely soon he murmurs, "Carlotta,"
Opening wide his arms as if to clasp her.
She, when he turned, with glowing eyes dilate,
Pressing her brow, gazed on his forlorn state,
"Francisco," cried, then swooning sank away,
Blanched as December's coldest snows she lay.

FRANCISCO.

Francisco lifts her head upon his arm,
Grasps her cold hand, and soon the current warm
Pulsing from her crushed heart wakens the brain,
And starts to life her sorrows, sad-hued train.
Francisco's saddened face doth now express
Sweet pitying love and deepest tenderness.
With choking voice he said, "Carlotta, dear,
Oh! tell me why in seas remote art here?
Whence come you now, or is this but a dream;
Is this thy hand, is 't not what it doth seem?
Is 't thee, Carlotta? Wilt thou lead me back,
Along that fiery, scorched, hideous track,
To love, to home, to all, to all, to thee?
Oh! shall we not upon this distant sea
Say that that night when at the garden gate
You left me and I blindly marched to fate,
Was but a dream; and let us now awake
To love's long day, when night's black clouds do break."
She closed her eyes, nor spoke, nor shuddered e'en,
But for an instant still as death had been,

FRANCISCO.

Then rose and left his side, and turning spake
With trembling voice, as lipping ripples break
Upon the pebbly marge of crystal pond,
Couched 'neath a peak where wint'ry snows abound :
“ I came upon these seas at love's behest —
With my dead husband sought the bloody west,
Where now, alas ! killed by your brutal crew,
His soul to heaven has gone, his bones bestrew
The slimy bed and the broad caverned deep
Of the insatiate sea. I cannot weep,
For my cleft heart, o'ercharged with widow's woe,
Hath dried the deepest fount of tears, and so
I weep no more. But you, whom I thought dead,
Like an unholy apparition, spread
Destruction 'round my hearth, my fortune wrench,
And snatch with armèd hand ; my young hopes quench.
Now take me, with thy brother here, and erst
Wreak thy mad vengeance, do thy very worst.”
“ My brother,” gasped Francisco. “ Oh ! my soul ! ”
Then strides more near, one glance takes in the whole

FRANCISCO.

Of form and feature. On his knees the priest
Sinks down, uplifts his hands, "Oh you, at least!"
He cries, "will save me, my own brother dear."
Francisco said, "Taddeo, oh! I fear
To trust my clement heart. Oh! would that night
Could swallow thee forever from my sight.
That Lethean waters might the mem'ry steep
Of all thy treach'ry in its rotting deep.
How came you here, and why, and with her, too?"
Taddeo lifts his head, himself updrew,
And trembling said, "Oh! brother whom I love,
Our mother dear, now dead and gone above,
Beseeches mercy from her saintly throne.
You would not cloud her brow with anger's frown."
"My mother dead," Francisco sighed, a hue
Of deadlier pallor o'er his features flew.
The priest speaks on: "I never, as I live,
And hope for mercy, never did I give
To Inquisition any thought or word
That came from thee, or aught I ever heard.

FRANCISCO.

'Twas thy own fear that drove thee from our home,
And naught that I had heard, or said, or done.
To Mexique's coast by Holy Church's command
I came three years ago, an humble brand,
To light upon its shores celestial fires —
To tune those savage hearts to heav'nly lyres.
A bishop now, I, at the Pope's behest,
Voyage upon this ship still farther west,
E'en to the spicy isles new fields to till,—
A lab'rer in Christ's vineyard, humble, still.
Two years scarce gone, since your Carlotta wed
Our Commandante brave, alas! now dead.
A noble Biscayan, though rich, at ease,
Still loved the perils of these distant seas.
And she left all to join her life to his;
Her earthly bliss is flown, the end is this.
Thy brother's, lover's heart still beats response
To ties of blood and love that filled it once.
A widow she, and I an humble priest;
Oh! shield us now; and whether west or east

FRANCISCO.

Our journeyings be, our prayers shall rise,
Joyful, in daily blessings to the skies.”
Francisco stands impassive, silent, pale,
While cowed Taddeo stammers forth his tale;
Save that across the marble of his face
Carlotta’s name brought forth a crimson trace
Of hot blood coursing from his suff’ring heart,
But quick repressed,—stern will played well its part;
Then slowly said: “Thou liest, treacherous knave!
With cunning craft thou day by day didst lave
My trusting soul with confidence in thee;
Drew my thoughts with many a specious plea
From their deep hidden wells, where scarce I knew
They lurked profound, or fashioned were or grew;
Transmuted each with poison of thine own,
And thus disfigured, bore it to be strown
Before the Inquisition, witness true
Of speech heretic, thoughts blasphemous, too.
I know it all; how those base devils stood,
Ready at thy behest to spill my blood.

FRANCISCO.

What fate for this deservest thou to have?"

Taddeo cried: "Oh, brother, save! Oh, save!"

Then rage o'ermastering, Francisco cried:

"Take off the wretch; tie weights upon each side,

And hurl him forth into the hungry sea,

Down deep as lowest slimy depths can be."

The poor priest shrieked; for seized by sturdy men,

And bound and gagged he was. Francisco then

Became himself; his passion died away;

To sailors gave command that they should stay

The execution; then he calmly said:

"'T is not for thee, but for our mother dead,

I'll let thee live. Stay, curse the earth awhile."

The assembled captains wond'ring stood meanwhile,

Till Ralph the Red stepped forth; with angry voice

And arrogant, spoke thus: "I claim my choice

Of prisoners. 'T was I and my ship's crew

Who first upon these decks clomb up and threw

FRANCISCO.

Death and disaster through the coward band,—
I killed the Commandante where I stand.
I therefore claim the woman as my own.”
Carlotta trembled ; but a deadly frown
Blackened Francisco’s brow. He sharply said :
“Thou take that woman ! o’er my body dead,
And stark it fain must be. No man here lives
Who to this lady slightest insult gives.
You claim her ! No ; thou low-browed, brutal hound,
Her sweet young life shall never know such wound.”
Right to the core the rage of Ralph was stirred ;
He drew his gleaming sword, and scarce the word
Had died on Derwent’s lip ere, with a stride,
He thrusts his blade ; the pass goes to one side.
Francisco, instant as the trembling flash
Of lightning, from beneath his crimson sash
Drew his Toledo ; and the clanging steel
Frighted the air with ringing, deadly peal.
Clang ! clang ! the swords shriek forth. What noble joy
To cut and slash good blades without alloy !

FRANCISCO.

At last, Red Ralph, with sudden forward lunge,
His sword into Francisco's heart doth plunge.
He reeled, he sank upon the deck ; his sword
Dropped by his side ; he sank without a word.
Scarce had he touched the planks ere Richard Bell
His sleeping hatred waked. "Thou fiend of hell!"
Hissed in the ear of Ralph the Red, who turned
And hoarsely cried : "Thou, too ? Oh ! well I've earned
The right to clip thy callow pride to-day.
I'll teach thee that 't is time to whine and pray !"
Again the clanging steel beneath the sail,
But for an instant only. No avail
Ralph's knotted sinews ; for he slipped and fell,
And ere he rose, the other did impel
The thirsty blade deep in his shaggy breast,
Reaching life's centre in its ruthless quest.
Death closed his eyes ; he there extended lay
Upon the deck, his heart's blood ebbd away.
Meantime, Carlotta, with tenderest care,
Lifts up Francisco's head, strokes back the hair,

FRANCISCO.

And gazes on his face, while new-born tears
Blot from her heart all woman's doubts and fears.
Nor heeds the fray, but gazes wildly down
Upon his bloodless face, bereft of frown.
At last Francisco slowly opes his eyes,
And gazes vacantly, without surprise,
Until he sees, close to his own, the face
Of weeping loved Carlotta, and doth trace
The sorrow, tears and grief, commingled there,
And breathes the perfume of her falling hair ;
When thus he spoke, with intermittent start,
As the red current slowly left his heart :
" Oh ! my Carlotta, I have loved you well,
But now all fades away ; aye, e'en that spell.
Life's petty round of joys, are sure not worth
The pain of living, but I wot there is
Some purpose hid beneath, which none ere this
Of men have known, perhaps shall never know.
Men ever toil and women love. All throw

FRANCISCO.

The dice 'gainst fate, and though most frequent lose,
Are eager still to throw, and pick and choose.
I soon have lost ; ready and glad to go,
I wish no other chance, no other throw.
Ah, me ! The light grows dim. Whether away
Go I to darkness, or another day,
Or back into the immeasurable whole
Am I dissolved ——”

The end was reached ; his limbs relaxed in death,
As ceased upon the air his fading breath.

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